

kitchen knife, but she came up empty handed every time. After two weeks, she finally convinced Ellis to do something; he'd kept insisting that the boy would turn up sooner or later, as soon as he got hungry.

But his wife's arm twisting lit a fire under him. He drove out to the back roads behind the city and picked up several Mexican Nationals who were living in the hills, waiting for the strawberry harvest. He armed them with machetes and turned them loose on a jungle-clearing search for his boy.

They found him, fattened up on a diet of pill bugs, that he'd foraged on his own, and raw bunny parts, supplied to him by a litter of rogue, half-Chihuahua, half-Dachshund dogs who'd wandered into the territory and set up house.

Ruth cried with joy when she was reunited with her child, and she immediately tried to suckle him, but he refused her proffered breast; he wanted meat instead:

his carnivorous cravings had been awakened, and there was no turning back now.

THE REPERTOIRE EXPANDS

The Loma Alta Brass Band practiced in Clete and Juanita's living room, attempting to expand their repertoire. Last weekend they'd had a bad experience at the mall: a sales clerk from the Plump and Pretty Shop, irritated at hearing Cole Porter's "Anything Goes" for the fourth time in an hour, dragged Bob off the bandstand and slapped him silly. She'd singled him out because the chainsaw growl of his saxophone had felt like it was cutting through her skull. The other members of the band took her hint and packed their instruments up immediately.

So now the boys were trying out some new songs: Sonny Boy Williamson's "Eyesight to the Blind," for one.

The walls vibrated as Ellis huffed into his tuba; the windows shook with Butch's trombone wah-wahs. And Ginger, Clete's wife's little skinny-legged Chihuahua, ran yipping out the doggie door to the back yard as Clete toodled into the high-pitched, ear-stabbing melody on his clarinet.

Clete's wife Juanita tried hard to concentrate on her sewing in the back bedroom. She was working on a butterfly print muu muu, and even though she had her ears stuffed with cotton, she could still 'feel' the tuba. It shook her right down to the marrow of her bones, and rattled her

sewing machine away from the wall. She tried to follow it, cursing at the crooked hem, and cursing louder when she sewed her finger to the cloth.

The boys took a break. Clete said he thought they were sounding fine. Ellis caught his breath. Bob wiped his forehead with a handkerchief, and Juanita yelled out from the back bedroom that their practice session was over, whether they liked it or not, as she hand-backed the machine, undoing the stitching from her finger, trying not to get too much blood on the cloth.

— Dan Lenihan

Oceanside CA

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